

Introduction

Şefika Şule Erçetin

Over the course of many years, at different places and times within my own country and abroad, I have been given many opportunities to discuss and present lectures on the topic of leadership. My discussants and audiences consisted of many people with widely different interests in learning or extending their knowledge and sharpening their skills in leadership. This goal has been pursued through courses, conferences, symposiums, projects and various types of studies. The purpose of this book is to share that exciting and instructive process with my readers. To that end, we will begin with some of the most crucial questions and issues that arise in the study of leadership, some universally fundamental ideas:

- Can an individual be born as a leader or become a leader only after some experience?
- What is leadership and what are the assets of a successful leader? Is it possible to determine a good or bad leader?
- What are the types and styles of leadership? Are there criteria that can unmistakably identify a good leader? What are the relationships between chaos, complexity, network and leadership?
- And...of course, an age-old question. “Is leadership by women different from that of men? If so, what are the criteria that explain this phenomenon? Or why they do not?”

Firstly, a long held assertion of mine is that “everyone is a potential leader”. This is one of the issues that gave rise to the longest discussions in every group, and everywhere I went. Emergence of potential is related to many variables such as education, personal characteristics, individual awareness, and circumstances such as

Ş.Ş. Erçetin (✉)
Hacettepe University, Ankara, Turkey
e-mail: sefikasule@gmail.com

Ş.Ş. Erçetin
International Science Association (ISCASS), Ankara, Turkey

© Springer International Publishing AG 2016
Ş.Ş. Erçetin (ed.), *Women Leaders in Chaotic Environments*,
Lecture Notes in Social Networks, DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-44758-2_1

an individual in an emergent potential can be differentiating in terms of effect size and level during leadership processes. When I explain this, I immediately receive responses such as How so? Did I? Me too? Did her/his?

We have all heard judgments made of the following nature: “He or she is a born leader.” “No one who early in life fails to become a leader can later become a leader.” “Not everyone can be a leader.” “Not everybody has leadership potential.” Sometimes value judgments such as saying “I am a leader” are not compatible with humility but can be in the background of these thoughts. At this point, I should specify that many people see and define themselves as leaders after a certain time and experience; people can say “Yes, also I am a leader, I am practicing leadership.” At the same time they may think “I am not aware of this leadership, nor can I define this as leadership or humility. It is a different thing, but I AM a leader”.

Perhaps, in many cases, people perceive the leadership phenomenon as being a place of much higher level from themselves and shape their places and positions by customizing their own behavior. Many people think of education as consisting of studies taking place in schools. They further conceive of education as a process in which the leadership of some people who had not been educated in school could educate their own children. Whereas education is a multidimensional process that extends to all dimensions of life and are richer than we can evaluate in this limited context.

At the same time, perhaps leadership is construed as a chosen result in reaching a defined point, more than an ongoing process. This means that leadership cannot be valued enough through only results, experiences or individual exertions. Rather, leadership consists of expanding, growing and developing multidimensional processes such as a high level of self-awareness, continuous self-renewal, including the development of an intense effort, in sacrifice, faith and determination. Moreover, as always, there is no guarantee that these efforts will result in success; leadership represents a challenge that includes many tests that can bring the satisfaction of solving problems and the suffering of failing for those who do not.

Secondly, we continue pursuit of the questions “What is leadership?” and “Who is a leader? How can we determine that somebody is or is not a leader? From my own experience, I can say that these questions depend on how leadership is perceived and defined. Ok, then what IS leadership?” The question is open to discussion. We should be able to predict the countless and unlimited meanings that can characterise this concept, in literature, and in everyday life. Almost everyone tries to define leadership according to their own unique insights and perceptions. Defining leadership is not that easy. We can easily compromise on a definition of leadership as a concept that is dynamic in both theoretical and practical senses, evolving as they proliferate and diversify installed meanings; some people give new meaning with their styles, personalities create visions.

Then, who is a leader, how can we understand that somebody is a leader? We can observe that, in many times and places, many people have attempted to answer these questions in conflict with each other. In fact, in a sense, the answers are simple and clear, if you perceive someone as a leader, that leader is defacto s/he. You can decide somebody is a leader or not by taking a criterion according to your

own meanings and qualities on the leadership concept. For instance, if you evaluate leadership as a product of extrovert personality traits, you cannot perceive as a leader somebody who has introverted personality traits. Or, if you think of leadership as a position or role that belongs to men, perhaps you cannot think of a woman as a leader. You may simply be waiting for women to reveal their lack of leadership or that they lack a profile specific to men in this regard.

It should not be forgotten that, in general, people easily perceive a man as a leader but cannot perceive or accept a woman in that role. This fact and other similar examples demonstrate that, in many parts of the world, men and women cannot be adequately assessed for many people's leadership potential evaluation. All of this dynamic has revealed leadership assessment as only a perceptual phenomenon.

We should always remember that an individual may not be perceived as a leader, but that does not mean the person is NOT a leader. Considering that one can perceive as a leader someone who others cannot see as a leader, we might consider the effect of a broader, richer, more tolerant and deeper approach. Moreover, one who cannot demonstrate a successful leadership profile in certain cases can demonstrate successful leadership potential in different positions in another state. Perhaps you may need to re-evaluate attributes, scope and a number of other leadership criteria. No matter what field or level, female or male, criteria that you use to evaluate whether someone is a leader or not, perhaps you may want to add a few more criteria as follows;

- Is there a case in which a potential leader espouses an intellectual and philosophical background that s/he believes?
- Does s/he have a vision that has shaped the context of this case?
- Does this vision include,
 - long-term inspired dreams, as well as short and medium term projects to realize concrete achievements?
 - clear, understandable ideas, emphasizing alternative policies and strategies?
 - humanistic values that reveal new values with new achievements, leading the future, justifying the lives of millions of people at least as strong as yours?
 - is that the history which has already been written of the future you may have in mind?
- Does s/he perceive leadership as a phenomenon in the integrity of a leader-follower?
- Does s/he connect leadership to superior qualities of him/herself?
- Does s/he take into consideration the interests and needs of followers?
- Does s/he create common grounds and interactional environments to integrate with followers?
- Did s/he know that every interaction creates an area defined as the edge of chaos?
- Did s/he think that this area includes complexity, uncertainty and risk and at the same time offers learning, development and creativity opportunities?

- Did s/he think that a leader is required to ensure leadership as strong and orderly, not dispersed and disrupted, fluid and adaptable rather than stagnant and locked?
- Does s/he feel or make others feel the impact of union, integrity, solidarity and the common future of human society?
- Does s/he follow, investigate and take into account the results in the actions of global, regional and local relationship-phenomenon patterns?
- Does s/he consider a multivariate and alternative management approach that understands the difficulty of obtaining reliable and high probability predictions for the future?

Of course these criteria are not limited to the list above. That list can be thought of as a selection of questions that have been arisen through many years, many of which have been widely adopted, all of which must be part of any leader's guidebook. As I said in the beginning, and feel that I need to say again, our agenda does not emerge only from discussions, conflicts and a list of agreed criteria.

Thirdly, what are the types and styles of leadership? What management skills are the most fruitful? What are the relationships among chaos, complexity, networking and leadership? Leadership styles and types... Democratic, autocratic, laissez faire, cultural, visionary, charismatic, old school, transformational, perceptual, quantisation, plasma... Numerous types and styles of leadership can be adopted. There exist an abundance of leadership styles and types that cannot be adequately described in this introduction. However, the reader will find in this book the names and writings of many authors who have written and lectured on this abundance. Perhaps you will have the opportunity to understand more easily the ideas of leaders that you know in terms of leadership types from different perspectives.

More than that, I can say that relationships among chaos, complexity, networking and leadership are the most studied topics and need to be thoroughly understood. As we observed our own behavior in our studies, we were able to see that a chaotic atmosphere is not stable and repetitive. Mobility and dynamics are results of multi-dimensional interactions among the factors within the system. In general terms, "chaos is a state of disorder". The common properties of chaos are generally consciousness, complexity, connectivity, dissipation and emergence. The most important one in terms of networks is connectivity. Chaos is a source of life, a reality for organizations and people as living and self-organizing systems.

Leaders could potentially emerge who are able to face complexity simply and openly, dynamically and timely, to be flexible and ready for transformation, able to turn abundance into richness, are creative and participative and who turn uncertainty into certainty.

We also adopt the view that organizations are self-adapting chaotic systems. When an organization envisions future and possible probabilities, it will challenge change and uncertainty, and will make chaos an opportunity to succeed. Not only are organizations but also societies are self-adapting chaotic systems. All in all, the most important characteristics of complex adaptive systems are evolution of

togetherness. To mention some properties of complex adaptive systems, we can include the following: order, complexity, adaptable, unpredictable, self-organizing, on the edge of chaos, the butterfly effect, and the red queen race. These characteristics are interrelated with each other in various combinations.

In this context, if we consider management of complex adaptive systems, we can see that it is a combination of deliberate and emergent strategies. We think that organizations, societies or groups can be productively studied and theorized about in these terms. In this context, these are the fundamental assumptions that we adopt:

- CAS are made up of a multitude of agents, in a non-straightforward manner, including people who are connected to and interact with each other, who functionally and structurally make up a unit.
- They interact with themselves and with other complex adaptive systems, and together these systems make up an environment that requires responsiveness from all parties.
- They observe the consequences of their own actions as well as the stimuli that enable those actions, and the responses of others to those actions.

Evolution works much faster when networks are decomposed. Chaos is an indicator of a rich network connectivity. A slow evolutionary development is an indicator of too much connectedness. This can be defined as performance decline. When the performance of one agent is related to another, their performance may become under optimal. To determine the best performing people in a network is a high priority. If we can be effective in connectivity, information flow can happen very fast. Because the rate of information flow allows us to learn from the events of a case, it allows us to make better decisions.

Fourthly, is leadership of women different from that of men? Who are the women leaders that have made a difference? Have it been noted that most of the books and works on women leadership are biographies of women leaders? Also, analyses of women leaders are generally made within the realm of a linear thinking style. Despite significant obstacles and barriers for women who are ambitious for leadership, there have been giant strides taken by women to arrest or undo the scenario. Even those women who rose steadily through the ranks eventually crashed into an impenetrable barrier while men continued to be more likely to be accelerated into management positions by means of the “glass escalator”. It is still crucially necessary that women are helped upward and continuously supported in order to demonstrate their abilities to attain key roles as leaders. Therefore, although societies have subjected women to some stereotypical tendencies engendering prejudices that identify women with particular occupational structures, there is a lot that can be done to improve on the situation. The following are key ways of addressing the concern in question:

- helping women to develop necessary confidence levels to pursue leadership positions
- cultivating successful mentoring relationships for female professionals
- networking inside and outside of the office

- understanding men's and women's changing roles at work and at home and
- striking a balance between excelling at work and having a fulfilling personal life (this is always a threat to women indeed)

Social factors constitute important obstacles as women assume managerial tasks. Changes in the social structure have been too slow to place them in managerial positions for adequately long periods. These periods are crucial to develop women leaders in qualities that are proactive. They must have the opportunity to prove they are adaptable, able to negotiate, good at observation, focused, self-confident, respected, self-promoting, outspoken and authentic.

Accordingly, not many studies have explored women leadership and leaders in an expansive mode, bringing on board their approach to leadership and the adaptation to the demands of chaotic environments from which they lead. Many questions have been asked about women's opportunities. You can find the answer to these questions in this book. Enjoy it...